



OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING Graeagle, CA 96103-1466

June 3, 2016

STAFF REPORT: Over Snow Vehicle Program

STAFF: Kelly Long, Winter Recreation Program Manager

SUBJECT: Over Snow Vehicle Program Overview

Summary

The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division supports winter recreation in California through the Over Snow Vehicle (OSV) Program. This report provides an overview of the OSV Program.

Discussion

National forests throughout California offer a wide array of winter recreation opportunities to the public, including snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and snow play. Since the early 1980s, funds from the California Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Trust Fund have supported the management and maintenance of motorized winter recreation through the OSV Program.

The OSV Program encompasses 26 groomed trail systems on 11 national forests, from the Sequoia National Forest in the south to the Modoc National Forest in the north. Operation and facility maintenance activities include grooming over 1,700 miles of snowmobile trails, plowing parking areas and/or maintaining restroom facilities at 34 trailheads, and plowing 97 miles of access road. Additionally, the OSV Program funds the purchase and maintenance of trail markings and signage, preparation and printing of trail maps, and seasonal trail monitoring. The groomed trails are predominately maintained for OSV (snowmobile or snow machines) use; however, other OHV users also use the trails in limited areas. Nordic skiers, snowshoers, and other non-motorized recreationists can also use the parking areas and groomed trail systems.

Motorized winter recreation was initially supported through competitive grants awarded to national forests and other entities from the Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program. Since 2005, the OHMVR Division has provided more stable funding for the OSV Program by entering in to direct contracts with each of the 11 national forests and three counties in the program. These contracts were year-to-year until 2010 when the OHMVR Division prepared an environmental impact report (EIR) to consider the effects of entering into long-term contracts to fund the OSV Program. The EIR examined the

existing program level condition as well as potential growth that could occur over the 10-year program period covering the 2010/2011 through 2019/2020 winter seasons. The OHMVR Division adopted the EIR, which guides the OSV program.

In 2015, the OHMVR Division and United States Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region (Region) renewed the new Master Challenge Cost Share Agreement between the two agencies. The Master Challenge Cost Share Agreement allows the OHMVR Division to enter into supplemental project agreements with individual national forests in the Region to provide for OSV trail grooming and related activities. This agreement will continue through December 31, 2020.

The OHMVR Division owns and maintains a fleet of 15 grooming tractors, which accomplishes most of the OSV trail grooming. These grooming tractors are stationed throughout the state and are operated by forest service personnel and volunteer operators. The state-owned fleet is continually upgraded to replace older equipment with more fuel efficient, cleaner burning tractors. Volunteers and private contractors provide additional grooming on several forests.

In 2016, the state-owned fleet recorded over 1,500 hours of grooming. This marked a substantial increase from the winters of 2014 and 2015, when approximately 100 and 300 hours of grooming, respectively, were recorded due to the poor to non-existent snow conditions.

Through the combined efforts of the OHMVR Division, national forests, counties, and numerous volunteers, the OSV Program provides quality, managed winter recreation that is important to local communities throughout the mountains of California.

Commission Action

For information only.

Attachments

Attachment 1: OSV Trail System Map

Attachment 2: Photo of grooming tractor and groomed trail



